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« *Prismatic Prehistory: Ernst Herzfeld on Early Iran* », in : Ann C. Gunter & Stephan R. Hauser, eds, *Ernst Herzfeld and the Development of Near Eastern Studies, 1900-1950. Leiden/Boston, 2005, pp. 215-259.*

Aurélië Daems

- 1 Margaret Cool Root provides an excellent account on the accomplishments and failures of Ernst Herzfeld as a pioneer on many things Iranian. As the title suggests focus is put on 'prismatic – read "Herzfeldian" – prehistory', i.e. on the many spectrum flashes that characterized the study of anything prehistoric during the 'early days'. Archaeological and collegial issues, artefacts of Herzfeld's personal interest all very clearly pass the revue and are set against the background of the Near Eastern archaeological scene of the early 20th century. Telling is the manner in which the whole problem of origin, meaning and use of prehistoric seals is addressed: vagueness on the way Herzfeld obtained, collected and 'bequeathed' his corpus of Iranian prehistoric seals; and the subsequent implications for insights into meaning are largely discussed here. Another portion of the article is devoted to the ambivalent stance Herzfeld adopts when it comes to pinpointing issues of ethnicity; again seen in the light of contemporary politics. A last part is reserved for the way Herzfeld advocated the pivotal role of Iran's highlands played in 'diffusing culture from East to West'. In sum this is a paper that should be known by anyone working on prehistoric Iranian material, since it clearly demonstrates the many pitfalls with which any scholar and in extension the discipline of Iranian archaeology has been concerned from its early days onwards.

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Thèmes : 3.0. Généralités

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